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CORRUPT PARLIAMENTS.

AN EXTRACT FROM

ALEXANDER SCOTT'S LEGACY

TO HIS

COUNTRY.

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"WE are perhaps effectually freed from the Tyrannical STUARTS, (1689, the reader will please to remember, was the next year after the Revolution) and from *popery* and *slavery*: but methinks I see another evil rushing in upon us, which, if it prevails to a great degree, and posterity should be at a loss how to deal with it, may reduce the nation to a state of more helpless distress than that from which we hope in God we are just delivered; if the dangerous mode of Government lately adopted, of *closeting*, *pensioning* and *placing* the Members of the *House of Commons*, should be carried to all the lengths which may be imagined—posterity may see some hundreds of *placemen* sitting in the House, beside a multitude of *secret pensioners* and *expectants*, who having a prospect of indemnifying themselves, may be ready to humour a corrupt Court in loading the People with Taxes, in voting a numerous standing Army, in retrenching Liberty, particularly that of the Press!—in multiplying needless exorbitant Places; in demolishing the great barrier against Tyranny, *Trial by Juries*; in building kingly prerogative, and parliamentary privilege on the ruins of MAGNA CHARTA, and the constitution; and establishing a Tyranny, the

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the more formidable, as it will have the appearance of *regular and constitutional Government*, by *King, Lords and Commons*; and as opposition to it will be called *Rebellion* against lawful authority. In those dismal times the will of the Court will be the law of the Houses, the known sense of the People will be disregarded, and responsibility to Constituents a matter of *ridicule*!

I leave these papers to be published after my decease, that posterity may not be unprepared for this tremendous event, which will effectually and irrevocably rivet the chains of servitude on the People of Britain—unless they take courage, lay aside *party views*, and act *unanimously* as follows.

Whenever the People shall find themselves in the situation here described, let the Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Common Council, Livery and Merchants, the incorporated Companies and other Inhabitants of the great, the rich, the free Metropolis, put forth a declaration that they see the National Liberty to be, by means of *Parliamentary Corruption* in imminent danger, and that they hold it absolutely necessary, that Parliaments be made (as originally Annual, with exclusion of two-thirds, by rotation every parliament, that the inconsiderable Boroughs be deprived of the privileges arbitrarily given them by Kings and Queens, of sending Members (to the number of sixty additional in one reign) and the Metropolis, the great Counties and rich Cities and Towns have such an addition of Representatives as shall keep up the present number of the House of Commons upon the whole; and that no known *Placemen*, or *Pensioner*, or *Officer in the Navy or Army* have a seat in the House, with heavy penalties in case of transgression and reward to Informers.

Every man of common sense will see that these few regulations will at any time restore efficiency to the Constitution, because they will render *bribery* on the part of the Court impossible; and then the Members will have no interest but that of their *Country* to pursue.

The consequence of the City's declaration will be, that the County of Middlesex and all the Counties and all the Cities and great Towns will publish declarations to the same effect—let all the inhabitants of the capital, or if possible of the Island, (besides the Houses of Parliament) meet and insist on the passing of such acts as they shall see necessary for the Public Safety!!!

If twenty thousand lives should (which God forbid) be sacrificed in one day in endeavouring to obtain the restoration of purity of parliament, they will to gain so important a point, be well bestowed. For (let posterity hear and tremble) a corrupt House of Commons is the greatest evil that ever can arise in England; it is the evil which unredressed must bring a total extinction of *Liberty*, for England can never be enslaved but by a Parliament; and without interposition of the People, will under a *Corrupt Parliament*, most certainly lose her liberties.

If the *King, Lords and Commons* of those times (if ever such times should come) do presume to refuse when required, by the whole People

ple to grant these securities of liberty which, if they were the true fathers of the People, they ought spontaneously to hold out to them without staying to be asked; if the Government of those times should presume I say, to refuse the demand of the whole People, this will be *ipso facto*—declaring themselves the determined enemies of the People! to whom they owe their authority; and it will then be lawful and necessary for the People to break all measures with them, and to treat them as all wise and brave nations have treated the declared enemies of their Liberties.

Let not dastardly spirit check the genius of England when rousing in vindication of Liberty, by crying out “the Army!! the Army!!!” an Army of Englishmen will hardly be brought to fight against the Liberties of Englishmen; if they be so mercenary as to shew themselves disposed to murder their Countrymen for hire, let the People outbid the Government—Surely the purse of the former is deeper than that of the latter, let the People assure the Soldiery that taking the side of Liberty, they shall have their own Liberty, improved from slavery for life, to dismissal with continued pay for life; or from the condition of Soldiers, to that of Militiamen—Mischief has on such occasions been prevented by timely besieging the Commanders of the Army in their houses; Officers will always be Gentlemen of education; such persons may generally be ashamed into tenderness for their country, The more mercenary may be better provided for by the People than the Court can afford; some may be spirited away, many will dread the resentment of the People; for Officers cannot be always guarded by their men. *An Army without Commanders, is a flock of sheep without a shepherd.*

But the matter is not likely ever to come to this extremity—Unless Englishmen loose their national character; the Members of both Houses will hardly be so desperate as to oppose the undoubted sense of the nation properly declared and enforced; they will dread *assassination*, in the country where the Soldiery will not be able to save them; they will consider the whole People as an overmatch for six or eight hundred, and that without doing them any violence within the law, the many must have it in their power to make the lives of the few a burden to them.

These hints I leave for the wisdom and bravery of posterity to work upon. *The sooner the envenomed weed of Parliamentary Corruption is attacked, the more easily it will be eradicated. “O my Countrymen, resolve before it be too late to destroy Parliamentary Corruption—else it will destroy you!”*

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